

3 May 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: OTR Education Committee Meeting

25X1A9a 1. The OTR Education Committee met on 25 April 1963 at 1300 hours.
25X1A9a Members absent were [REDACTED]
25X1A9a [REDACTED] was out of town; [REDACTED] were attending to
urgent business. The guests were Miss [REDACTED] 1A

2. The general subject for this meeting was "Pros and Cons of Part-Time Training Courses in OTR." The topic was discussed by a panel consisting of:

[REDACTED], AIB/R/TR
A&E Staff
AS/TR
S/TR
CH/OS/TR

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This discussion was planned mainly to explore from several OTR viewpoints the feasibility of part-time courses, possibly for future planning purposes. However, a consensus was neither anticipated nor desired. At the outset, one panelist observed that the subject could be more accurately stated as the "pros and cons of part-time trainees," since the training courses themselves are complete units of instruction.

Selection of this discussion topic antedated OTR's announcement of significant space losses, both office and classroom, in Headquarters Building. Impending space limitations have necessitated close scrutiny of past course scheduling practices in the hope of finding workable solutions to OTR space problems; consequently, the entire discussion seemed timely and pertinent. In discussing the assigned subject, the panelists also expressed their views on several related topics, including the pros and cons of full-time training as well as problems anticipated from a reduction in available OTR classrooms from 16 to 7 and the relocation of certain segments of OTR. After the panel presentations, considerable group interchange ensued.

Since the total discussion seemed current and relevant, this memorandum contains a distillation of the many viewpoints expressed. For brevity, PT designates part-time training and FT is used for full-time courses.

3. PART-TIME TRAINING

a. Pros

Students tend to complete the entire course, when it is offered on a PT basis; whereas, they often attend only their "favorite" block of a FT course and skip the rest. Apparently the subject matter segments of a PT course appear as totally independent blocks of instruction, thus leading some students to overlook the important relationship of all the parts to the whole course.

Allotting student time among several training activities, e.g. reading, lecture, discussion, practical exercise, is a greater problem in a FT training program than in a PT course. In PT courses students seldom reach their absorption level, because each continuous segment of instruction is comparatively short. For this reason also variety of training methods and activities is less critical.

Senior level people who usually take the advanced courses tend to reach the point of diminishing returns quicker than do their younger colleagues. It would seem desirable, therefore, to offer advanced courses on a PT basis, leaving the bulk of basic training on a FT schedule. Furthermore, some "senior citizens" decline FT courses because of reluctance to leave their important jobs for a long, unbroken period.

It was also noted that high-level employees shy away from courses which require much outside preparation, and many senior level people harbor distaste for competitive testing and evaluation.

PT programs accommodate more students in limited classroom space, since PT schedules permit more "juggling" of instructors and rooms. Also, the same number of instructors can teach more students on a part-time basis than in FT courses.

The "tense" training atmosphere which prevails when language students are working for automatic responses, is less noticeable with PT trainees. Also, the highly motivated student, driven by his intellectual curiosity, will study many hours on his own time and thus does not require FT instruction. Disuse following a PT language course results in a lower loss rate than occurs after FT language study.

b. Cons

Educational research on the advantages and disadvantages of PT versus FT training programs is negligible; consequently, any conclusions on the subject must be based on observation, subjective judgment, and personal philosophy.

PT courses demand rigid adherence to time schedules, especially the dismissal time. When an employee does not return promptly to his job from a training session, the supervisor usually blames OTR for tardy dismissal of the class.

PT courses are usually inadequate when a "crash" requirement is levied on OTR. The student who must depart hurriedly for an urgent assignment often has to be trained FT to meet the unanticipated demand.

PT trainees frequently lose much valuable time traveling to and from classes. Transportation problems generally appear more acute for PT students than for those in FT training courses.

Traditionally, PT courses have been offered in the forenoon. This widely accepted practice militates against the most efficient use of classrooms and instructors. It was noted, however, that some PT language courses are now offered in the afternoon, and this break with tradition has been well accepted.

4. FULL-TIME TRAINING

a. Pros

The younger persons, usually taking the basic courses, have the physical stamina to sit through FT courses and profit fully from them.

Complete removal from office cares and frustrations frees the student's mind for concentrated study. Consequently, uninterrupted absence from the work situation enables the FT trainee to gain more from the program of instruction.

FT training does not, in each instance, mean 8 consecutive hours in the classroom. For example, a FT language course would consist of a diversified daily program, i.e. 5 hours in the classroom, 2 hours in the language lab, and possibly 1 hour in traveling, lunching, etc.

So much time is required to complete a language course, for example, that a FT program is required, unless the trainee's job situation permits him to spend many months in FT language study. Often individuals must be trained on a crash basis, which means maximum training in minimum time. Obviously, the less the leadtime for training, the more intensive the course must be. Some students, because of aptitude, motivation, and other factors, need more teacher assistance than others. Those needing maximum assistance probably should be in FT courses.

Two general observations concerning language instruction are recounted here: It is impossible to conclude that either PT or FT language training is superior, because so much depends upon each situation and the individuals involved. However, much language skill is lost unless the new learning is used almost immediately, or the person in question exerts sufficient "refresher" effort to maintain his level of skill.

From student reactions, it appears that many of them prefer FT training because they "want to get it over."

b. Cons

FT courses require maximum variety of training methods and activities.

FT training courses tend to exhaust the older trainee's stamina and diminish his receptivity. This is particularly true if the program contains much intense drilling, as in language instruction.

Disuse after a PT language course usually results in a higher loss rate than disuse following PT language training.

5. OTHER OBSERVATIONS

While there has been little basic research on FT vs. PT training, research findings do support the feasibility of learner motivation, training feedback, student application, distributed vs. massed practice, etc.

Reduction in the number of available OTR classrooms from 16 to 7 raises many problems, including transportation, instructor efficiency, and training logistics. Also, the relocation of training sites may cause some non-OTR speakers (guest speakers) to decline OTR invitations. In addition, it is believed that many potential trainees, particularly those with families, consider it a personal hardship to attend courses "out of town."

The current overall training situation accentuates the need to examine present instructional methods, practices, etc., and effect necessary changes. For instance, programmed instruction and correspondence-type training, particularly for the early or beginning parts of a course, deserve consideration. It also seems probable that more pre-course reading could lessen the duration of some training courses. Finally, the feasibility of reorganizing certain PT courses as compact FT training programs, including those offered at Headquarters Building, should be explored promptly.

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Educational Specialist